

Elder Wm Leffler

THE
ROANOKE RELIGIOUS
CORRESPONDENT,
OR,
MONTHLY EVANGELICAL VISITANT.

"Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."—John vi. 12.
"Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."—Danl. xii 4.

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☞ The remaining Chapters of the Virginia Baptist Chronicle will be published in some of the subsequent numbers of the Correspondent; but for certain reasons is suspended for the present.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

From a small work, entitled, "Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion," we make the following extract; not for the want of other matter, but from the conviction that the observations herein contained, will be read with unusual interest. The author is Mr. T. Erskine. His talents and piety are alone sufficient to recommend the work.
Ed. Star.

The reasonableness of a religion seems to me to consist in there being a direct and natural connexion between a believing the doctrines which it inculcates, and a being formed by these to the character which it recommends. If the belief of the doctrines has no tendency to train the disciple in a more exact and more willing discharge of its moral obligations, there is evidently a very strong

probability against the truth of that religion. In other words, the doctrines ought to tally with the precepts, and to contain in their very substance some urgent motives for the performance of them; because, if they are not of this description, they are of no use. What is the history of another world to me, unless it have some relation to my duties or happiness? If we apply this standard to the various religions which different nations have framed for themselves, we shall find very little matter for approbation, and a great deal for pity and astonishment. The very states which have chiefly excelled in arts and literature and civil government, have failed here most lamentably. Their moral precepts might be very good; but then these precepts had as much connexion with the history of astronomy as with the doctrines of their religion. Which of the adventures of Jupiter or Brama or Osiris could be urged as a powerful motive to ex-

cite a high moral action? The force of the moral precepts was rather lessened than increased by the facts of their mythology. In the religion of Mahomet, there are many excellent precepts; but it contains no illustration of the character of God, which has any particular tendency beyond or even equal to that of natural religion to enforce these precepts. Indeed, one of the most important doctrines which he taught,—viz. a future life beyond the grave,—from the shape which he gave to it, tended to counteract his moral precepts. He described it as a state of indulgence in sensual gratifications, which never cloyed the appetite; and yet he preached temperance and self-denial. It is evident, that any self-restraint which is produced by the belief of this doctrine, must be merely external; for the real principle of temperance could not be cherished by the hope of indulgence at a future period. The philosophical systems of theology are no less liable to the charge of absurdity than the popular superstitions. No one can read Cicero's work on the nature of the gods, without acknowledging the justice of the Apostle's sentence upon that class of reasoners,—“professing themselves to be wise, they become fools.”

As the principles and feelings of our nature, which are addressed in religion, are precisely the same with those which are continually exercised

in the affairs of this world, we may expect to find a resemblance between the doctrines of a true religion and the means and arguments by which a virtuous man acquires an influence over the characters and conduct of his fellow creatures. When a man desires another to do any thing, that is the precept; when he enforces it by any mode of persuasion, that is the doctrine. When the Athenians were at war with the Heraclidæ it was declared by the Oracle, that the nation whose king died first should be victorious in the contest. As soon as this was known, Codrus disguised himself, went over to the camp of the enemy, and exposed himself there to a quarrel with a soldier, who killed him without knowing who he was. The Athenians sent to demand the body of their king; which so alarmed the Heraclidæ, from the recollection of the Oracle, that they fled in disorder. Now, let us suppose that Codrus wished to inculcate the principle of patriotism in his countrymen. If he had merely issued a proclamation, commanding every citizen to prefer the interest of his country to his own life, he would have giving them a moral precept, but without a corresponding doctrine. If he had joined to this proclamation, the promise of honor and wealth as the rewards of obedience, he would have been adding a very powerful doctrine, yet nevertheless such a doctrine as must have

led much more directly to patriotic feeling and principle.—Vanity and avarice, without patriotism, might have gained those rewards: But if he wished to excite or to cherish the principle of patriotism in the hearts of his people, he chose the most eloquent and prevailing argument, when he sacrificed his life for them, and thus attracted their admiration and gratitude to that spirit which animated his breast, and their love to that country of which he was at once the representative and the ransom.

It is indeed a striking and yet an undeniable fact, that we are comparatively little affected by abstract truths in morality. The cry of a child will produce a greater movement, in almost any mind, than twenty pages of unanswerable reasoning. An instinctive acquaintance with this fact guides us in our feelings with our fellow creatures; and He who formed the heart of man, has attested his revealed word, by showing his acquaintance with the channel through which persuasion and instruction might be most effectually communicated. It may therefore be useful to illustrate, at greater length, the analogy which exists between the persuasions of the gospel, and those which might be fixed on as the most powerful arguments capable of being addressed to any human feelings on the subject of human interest.

Let us, then, present to our-

selves a company of men travelling along the sea-shore.—One of them, better acquainted with the ground than the rest, warns them of quicksands, and points out to them a landmark which indicated the position of a dangerous pass. They, however, see no great reason for apprehension; they are anxious to get forward, and cannot resolve upon making a considerable circuit in order to avoid what appears to them an imaginary evil; they reject his counsel, and proceed onwards. In these circumstances, what argument ought he to use?—What mode of persuasion can we imagine fitted to fasten on their minds a strong conviction of the reality of their danger and the disinterested benevolence of their adviser? His words have been ineffectual; he must try some other method; he must act. And he does so; for, seeing no other way of prevailing on them, he desires them to wait only a single moment, till they see the truth of his warning confirmed by his fate. He goes before them; he puts his foot on the seemingly firm sand, and sinks to death. This eloquence is irresistible: He was the most active and vigorous amongst them; if any one could have extricated himself from the difficulty, it was he; they are persuaded; they make the necessary circuit, bitterly accusing themselves of the death of their generous companion; and during their progress, as often as

these landmarks occur, his nobleness and their own danger rise to their minds and secure their safety. Rashness is now, not merely perilous,—it is ungrateful; it is making void the death of their deliverer.

To walk without God in the world, is to walk in sin; and sin is the way of danger. Men had been told this by their own consciences, and they had even partially and occasionally believed it; but still they walked on. Common arguments had failed; the manifestations of the Divine character in creation and providence, and the testimony of conscience, had been in a great measure disregarded: It thus seemed necessary that a stronger appeal should be made to their understanding and their feelings. The danger of sin must be more strikingly and unequivocally demonstrated; & the alarm excited by this demonstration must be connected with a more kindly and generous principle, which may bind their affections to that God from whom they have wandered. But how is this to be done? What more prevailing appeal can be made? Must the Almighty Warner demonstrate the evil of sin by undergoing its effects? Must he prove the danger of sin by exhibiting himself as a sufferer under its consequences? Must he who knew no sin suffer as a sinner, that he might persuade men that sin is indeed an evil?—It was even so. God became man, and dwelt among

us. He himself encountered the terrors of guilt, and bore its punishment; and called on his careless creatures to consider and understand the evil of sin, by contemplating even its undeserved effects on a being of perfect purity, who was over all, God blessed forever. Could they hope to sustain that weight which had crushed the son of God? Could they rush into that guilt and that danger against which he had so pathetically warned them? Could they refuse their hearts and their obedience to him who had proved himself so worthy of their confidence?—especially when we consider that this great benefactor is ever present, and sees the acceptance which this history of his compassion meets with in every breast, rejoicing in those, whose spirits are purified by it, and still holding out the warning of his example to the most regardless.

Ancient history tells us of a certain king who made a law against adultery, in which it was enacted that the offender should be punished by the loss of both eyes. The very first offender was his own son. The case was most distressing; for the king was an affectionate father as well as a just magistrate. After much deliberation and inward struggle, he finally commanded one of his own eyes to be pulled out and one of his son's. It is easier to conceive than to describe what must have been the feelings of the son in

these most affecting circumstances. His offence would appear to him in a new light; it would appear to him not simply as connected with painful consequences to himself, but as the cause of a father's sufferings and as an injury to a father's love.—If the king had passed over the law altogether, in his son's favour, he would have exhibited no regard for justice, and he would have given a very inferior proof of affection. We measure affection by the sacrifice which it is prepared to make, and by the resistance which it overcomes. If the sacrifice had been made, and the resistance overcome secretly in the heart of the king, there could have been but little evidence of the real existence either of principle or of affection; and the son might perhaps have had reason to think, that his pardon was as much the effect of his father's disregard of the law, as of his affection to him; and at any rate, even if he had given the fullest credit to the abstract justice and kindness which were combined in his acquittal, it is impossible that this theoretical character of his father could have wrought on his heart any impression half so energetic, or interesting, or overwhelming, as that which must have been produced by the simple and unequivocal and practical exhibition of worth which has been recorded. If we suppose that the happiness of the young man's life depended on the eradication

of this criminal propensity, it is not easy to imagine how the king could more wisely or more effectually have promoted this benevolent object. The action was not simply a correct representation of the king's character,—it also contained in itself an appeal, most correctly adapted to the feelings of the criminal. It justified the king in the exercise of clemency; it tranquillized the son's mind, as being a pledge of the reality and sincerity of his father's gracious purposes towards him; and it identified the object of his esteem with the object of his gratitude. Mere gratitude, unattracted by an object of moral worth, could never have stamped an impression of moral worth on his character; which was his father's ultimate design.—We might suppose the existence of this same character without its producing such an action; we might suppose a conflict of contending feelings to be carried on in the mind, without evidencing, in the conduct flowing from it, the full vehemence of the conflict, or defining the adjustment of the contending feelings; but we cannot suppose any mode of conduct so admirably fitted to impress the stamp of the father's character on the mind of the son, or to associate the love of right and the abhorrence of wrong with the most powerful instincts of the heart. The old man not only wished to act in perfect consistency with his own views of duty, but also

to produce a salutary effect on the mind of his son; and it is the full and effectual union of these two objects which forms the most beautiful and striking part of this remarkable history.

There is a singular resemblance between the moral exhibition and the communication which God has been pleased to make of himself in the gospel. We cannot but love and admire the character of this excellent prince, although we ourselves have no direct interest in it; and shall we refuse our love and admiration to the King and Father of the human race, who, with a kindness and condescension unutterable, has, in calling his wandering children to return to duty and to happiness, presented to each of us a like aspect of tenderness and purity, and made use of an argument which makes the most direct and irresistible appeal to the most familiar, and at the same time the most powerful principles in the heart of man?

In the gospel, God is represented in the combined character of a gracious parent and a just judge. His guilty children are arraigned before him and condemned: They have not only forfeited all claim to his favour, by the breach of that fundamental law which binds all intelligent creatures to love and resemble their Creator; but they have also by the same means contracted the diseases of sin, and lost that mental health which can alone capaci-

tate for spiritual enjoyment.—Thus, the consistency of their Judge, and their own diseased condition, seemed equally to cover their futurity with a pall of the deepest mourning. This disease constituted their punishment. Pardon, whilst this disease remained, was a mere name—Mercy, therefore, if at all communicated, must be communicated in such a way as to heal this disease—in such a way as to associate sin with the abhorrence of the heart, and duty with the love of the heart. The exhibition of the Divine character in this dispensation of mercy, must not only be consistent with its own excellence, but also suited to make an impression on the reason and the feelings of the guilty. And it is so.—The Judge himself bore the punishment of transgression, whilst he published an amnesty to the guilty, and thus asserted the authority and importance and worth of the law, by that very act which beamed forth love unspeakable, and displayed a compassion which knew no obstacle but the unwillingness of the criminals to accept it.—The Eternal Word became flesh; and exhibited, in sufferings and in death, that combination of holiness and mercy, which, if believed, must excite love, and if loved, must produce resemblance.

A pardon without a sacrifice, could have made but a weak and obscure appeal to the understanding or the heart. It

could not have demonstrated the evil of sin; it could not have demonstrated the graciousness of God; and therefore it could not have led men either to hate sin or to love God. If the punishment as well as the criminality of sin consists in an opposition to the character of God, the fullest pardon must be perfectly useless, whilst this opposition remains in the heart; and the substantial usefulness of the pardon will depend upon its being connected with such circumstances as may have a natural and powerful tendency to remove this opposition and create a resemblance. The pardon of the gospel is connected with such circumstances; for the sacrifice of Christ has associated sin with the blood of a benefactor, as well as with our own personal sufferings,—and obedience with the dying entreaty of a friend breathing out a tortured life for us, as well as with our own unending glory in his blessed society.—This act, like that in the preceding illustration, justifies God as a lawgiver in dispensing mercy to the guilty; it gives a pledge of the sincerity and reality of that mercy; and, by associating principle with mercy, it identifies the object of gratitude with the object of esteem, in the heart of the sinner. It may also here be observed, that the resurrection and ascension of Christ, as the representative of our race, not only demonstrate the Divine complacency

in the work of the Saviour, but exhibit to us also the indissoluble connexion which subsists between immortal glory and an entire unreserved acquiescence in the will of God; and thus the Christian hope is not directed to an undefined ease and enjoyment in heaven but to a defined & intelligible happiness springing from the more perfect exercise of those very principles of love to God and man which formed the character of their Master and still constitute his joy.

The distinction of persons in the Divine nature, we cannot comprehend; but we can easily comprehend the high and engaging morality of that character of God which is developed in the history of the New Testament. God give his equal and well-beloved Son, to suffer in the stead of an apostate world; and through this exhibition of awful justice, he publishes the fullest and freest pardon. He thus teaches us that it forms no part of his scheme of mercy to dissolve the eternal connexion between sin and misery. No; this connexion stands sure; and one of the chief objects of Divine revelation is to convince men of this truth. And justice does the work of mercy, when it alarms us to a sense of danger, and stimulates us to flee from a continually increasing wo. But the cross of Christ does not merely show the danger of sin; it demonstrates an unwearied compassion—a love

unutterable, which extends its invitations and entreaties of reconciliation as wide as the ravages of sin, in order that by such an instance of self-sacrificing solicitude on the part of God for their welfare, men might be allured to the love of Him who so loved them; and that their grateful admiration having for its object the full perfections of the Divine character, might gradually carry them forward to an entire resemblance of it.

Most men will have no hesitation to admit the general proposition, that the moral character of God supposes the union of justice and mercy in an infinite degree. Now the gospel history simply gives an individuality and a life to this general idea, in the same way that the old king's conduct towards his son gave an individuality and a life to the general idea of paternal affection in union with a regard for the laws. Most men will also admit, that the conduct of this good prince was suited not only to give a distinct view of his own principles, but also to stamp the character of these principles on the heart of his son. But the same causes operate in fitting the conduct of God, as declared in the gospel, for stamping the character of its principles on the hearts of those who believe it. The old king was sensible, that the abstract idea of his justice and affection would have had but very little influence on his son's cha-

racter; and therefore it was the part of a wise and benevolent man to embody this abstract idea in a palpable action, which might make an intelligible and powerful appeal to his understanding and his heart. The abstract idea of God's character has still less influence on our minds; because the invisible infinity of his essence adds incalculably to the natural vagueness and inefficiency of such impressions: It was therefore the part of a wise and benevolent Being to embody his attributes in a train of palpable and intelligible action, which might carry a distinct and influential appeal to our capacities and feelings. If the ultimate object of God's dealings with men had been to pardon their sins, this might have been done without giving them any information on the subject until they stood before the judgment-seat: But if his gracious object was, as the Bible represents it, to make men partakers of his own happiness, by communicating to them his own moral likeness, it was necessary that such an exhibition of his moral character should be made to them, as might convey to their understandings a distinct idea of it, and might address to their feelings of gratitude and esteem and interest, such appropriate excitements and persuasives as might lead to a full resemblance of it.

From the London Baptist Magazine.

ON PRAYER.

It has been said that prayer is the offering up of our desires to God. This definition is not sufficiently comprehensive; our desires must be offered up according to the rule he has given us, or they cannot be acceptable to him. Few things have a closer connexion with our present happiness, or with our future felicity, than prayer to God: we should therefore endeavour to form the most correct view of its nature. Jesus Christ spake a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; that is, that they should maintain a constant spirit of humble dependence on him—of desire of his favour—and of expectation of the good he had promised to them that seek him. This would be complying with the spirit of the precepts. *Pray without ceasing—In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.* The sacred writers use terms expressive of the ardour and earnestness of devotional minds; as—*lifting up the soul to God—pouring out the heart before him—crying to him with the voice—asking, seeking, and knocking,—wrestling with God—looking to him—and stirring up the soul to take hold of him, with many others of the like kind; all which convey the idea of great ardour of spirit, and stand directly opposed to dull formality and cold indifference—feelings scarcely to be tolerated in any thing,*

but in prayer to God, highly criminal.

They who crave the assistance of their fellow mortals have always a plea by which to urge their requests; the loss of a leg or an arm; their losses in trade or at sea; their pinching hunger, or their pressing difficulties; and by these they hope to obtain the relief which they seek. Thus it is with those who rightly call upon God; they have a special message at his throne. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, & the violent take it by force. They who, having been the vilest transgressors, yet strive to enter in at the strait gate, and wrestle in prayer, and are in earnest about their souls, determined, at all events to find admission into that holy place, will surely succeed; while the supine, the dilatory, and the luke-warm, will fall short of that felicity. The object of prayer is the one true and living God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the three divine Persons in the Deity. In the scriptures they are addressed jointly—*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you.* Sometimes the Father and Son only are mentioned; *Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.* The method used by christians in general, and which is quite in union with the economy of redemption by Christ, is to address the Fa-

ther, through the mediation of the Son by the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Through him, that is, Christ, we both, Jews and Gentiles, have access by one Spirit unto the Father. He who thus prays, honours Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as he does the Father; yet as the divine persons are separately addressed in the sacred volume, we may pray to each of them without being justly chargeable with idolatry. The manner of the divine existence is, perhaps the most mysterious doctrine of revelation; and it becomes us not to attempt to explore infinity, nor by searching to find out God; but to contemplate his adorable majesty with modesty, humility, and reverence. The comprehension of unity and plurality in the divine essence infinitely exceeds our powers.

In our approaches to God, we should recollect that he never hears us for our much speaking. We may not at all times be able to express what we feel, but we should be careful not to express more than we feel. *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.* Long prayers are hardly ever so acceptable as short ones; if the language made use of is simple, clear, and comprehensive, the shorter the better.

Prayer is the offering up of our desires to God. Prayer without desire, is like an altar without a sacrifice; *Lord, said*

David, thou hast heard the desire of the humble, thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt incline thine ear to hear.

The Pharisee went up into the temple to pray, but he stood by himself, at a distance from others, as though he were afraid he should be polluted by them. He affected to give glory to God, but what he said was a vain boast of self-righteousness. The publican, standing afar off, overwhelmed with shame and self-abhorrence at the recollection of his offences against God, would not lift up so much as his eyes upon heaven, but smote upon his breast, and said, *God be merciful to me a sinner.* In these two characters we see the vast difference both of views and of feelings which exist among those who profess to call upon God, and by them we are taught the necessity of humility before him, and that our chief errand, when we draw nigh unto him, should be to present our ardent desire for spiritual and eternal blessings. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.* Prayer is one of the means which keeps alive the souls of Christians; it strengthens and inflames those sparks of heavenly fire which God has placed in their bosoms, and which frequently appear ready to expire. It has an influence on their temper and conduct, and is essential to their peace. It increases in them the fruits of the Spirit, and reminds them of their sub-

jection to the Father of mercies. As to converse with the world has a tendency to make them worldly; so to converse with God tends to make them holy. Moses thus derived a glory which shone upon his countenance, and thus Christians obtain views of the glory of God as it shines in his Son, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

From Alden's Sermon.

FUTURE RETRIBUTION.

But for what purpose will the children of men be raised from the dead, and be judged according to their works? Is it as some imagine, that they all, whether holy or sinful, penitent or impenitent, believers or unbelievers, may be treated alike, and rewarded with everlasting glory? Will no distinction be made between him that served God, and him that served him not?—What then is the meaning of the subsequent verse? “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” What then is the meaning of the passage in the following chapter?—“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end; I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely; he that overcometh shall inherit all things, but the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake

which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” What then is the meaning of the passage at the close of the book of Revelations?—“The time is at hand. He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he which is filthy let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”—What then is the meaning of the apostle Paul, when he asserts that “the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe?” What then is the meaning of our Lord himself, when he declares respecting them, who shall be on his right hand, and on his left in the day of judgment,—“these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteousness into life eternal?”

Extract from Dr. Mason:

ON PASTORAL VISITATION.

The system of every well regulated church, is a system of fixed ministrations. For the lighter services of the pulpit; for social prayer and exhorta-

tion; generally for the more public exercises of religion, an itinerant ministry, although, with the exception of missionaries, far inferior in labour, in care, in self-denial, in responsibility, may get along and be popular. But for sound exposition of the Scriptures; for giving to every one his portion of meat in due season; for training up the youth; for coercive and preventing discipline; for carrying both the law and the gospel home to every man's business and bosom; briefly for binding up and consolidating the invaluable interests of a Christian community there are no adequate and no appointed means but a stated ministry. Without it there may be preachers in abundance; pastors, there can be none. This broad and obvious distinction is recognized in the form of a call, customary in our churches, which, taking for granted that a minister is to preach, lays the principal stress upon his pastoral character. True it is that no man can be a scriptural pastor, who does not "feed his flock with knowledge and with understanding," but he may provide their weekly food plenty and good, and yet lamentably fail in his pastoral work. For my own part, the longer I consider the nature and design of the Christian ministry, the more does the importance of those functions, which are termed parochial duty, rise to my view. I am persuaded that without them no congregation can permanently flourish, nor any pastor

be permanently comfortable. There are a thousand avenues to conviction which no public institution can enter; a thousand difficulties to be solved which the pulpit cannot reach. There is an adaptation of general truth to particular circumstances, fit only for the private walk, or the fire-side. There is a correspondence between doctrine preached and exemplified, which forces its way silently but most effectually to the heart.

By pastoral vigilance and prudence, abuses are to be checked, and scandals prevented, which when permitted to ripen for judicious cognizance, are often beyond remedy. It is of unutterable consequence to couple in the early associations of children, the idea of a minister with that of their Spiritual Father, and of their own relations and duties to the church of God: which is impossible without frequent and affectionate intercourse. The want of this is the most fertile secondary cause of that absurd contradiction which reigns among the churches—treating our youth as if they were mere heathen. The feeble are to be strengthened, the lame to be healed, the wanderers to be hunted up and brought back. The drooping spirit is to be cheered, the thoughtless spirit admonished, the impetuous spirit restrained. The presence of a faithful pastor refreshes the soul of labour, and sweetens the crust of poverty. His voice smooths the bed of sickness, and mitigates the rigours of death.

In short, his people expect from him numerous attentions which admit of no substitute. Withhold them, and affection, the basis of confidence and usefulness, gradually wears away. Talent may inspire admiration; it will certainly command respect; but it cannot extort love. On the other hand, there is nothing which men resent more promptly, forgive more reluctantly, and forget more slowly, than neglect. You may deny their requests; expose their errors;—you may reprove their faults; but neglect them you may not. The civilities of life, and the friendly exterior may remain;—but you shall find on the first decisive experiment that the power of affection is gone. They always feel themselves neglected when the parish services of their minister are not rendered. Whether the neglect be real or only apparent; whether there is just cause or not for the omission, are questions which may have some influence on the progress of things toward this result, but will very slightly, if at all, vary the result itself. The services are not rendered; and that is enough.

GOOD NEWS.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 105.

RICE'S MEETING HOUSE, Lower Banister Church, August 18, 1823.

During the last three days, we have enjoyed the pleasing satisfaction of witnessing and feeling the most manifest displays of sovereign goodness, mercy, and power, perhaps ever

seen in this part of the country before. In the year 1801, also in the year 1812, we were highly favoured with great and precious revivals; but the appearance of the gracious work of God on the hearts of sinners on these three memorable days beggars all description. "Surely the Lord was in this place!" On the Lord's day, August 17, the greater part of the congregation, which was estimated at upwards of two thousand souls, convened at an early hour on the banks of Banister river; about 11 o'clock, seventeen young converts, taking each other by the hand, went down into the water in a body, and in obedience to the command of their divine master, were decently immersed beneath the gentle flowing stream; the banks of which were crowded with anxious and weeping spectators. About noon the preaching commenced at a stage, and seats erected near the meeting house, when two discourses were delivered. The numerous assembly was solemn and uncommonly attentive, silent tears seemed copiously to flow from a great part of the congregation; but towards the close of the second discourse (about three o'clock P. M.) the scene was visibly changed: the celestial fire (for such it must have been) seemed suddenly to descend somewhat similar to an electric shock: an awful gloom pervaded the countenances of the unregenerate; at the same moment the faces of the saints were brightened with tears of joy;

loud shrieks and cries of anguish intermingled with heart rending groans, were reiterated through every part of the congregation.

The mourning noise increasing, preaching could no longer be distinctly heard; we endeavored to sing; but singing in order was impracticable. We descended from the stage to pray for mourning and broken-hearted souls, who, to the amount of five or six hundred, issuing from every part of the congregation, requested us to pray for them.

These exercises, consisting of prayer, exhortation, with singing at proper intervals, continued for about an hour. The day was very warm, and the preachers (two in number) being much exhausted by the duties of the day, about four o'clock dismissed the people.— But it was enough to have melted the most obdurate heart, to see parents and friends supporting the enervated mourners to their horses or carriages, and to hear the cries of the broken-hearted slowly retiring from the place of meeting, along the roads in different directions: the voice of lamentation gradually weakened as the distance increased, and at length gradually died on the ear; but the solemn impressions which this memorable day left on the heart will not be easily erased.

We wish it to be understood, that the noise at this meeting was solely from the unconverted and anxiously enquiring people;

we do not recollect a solitary instance of any noise from any professor of religion. It were to be devoutly wished, that any of our brethren who are disposed to censure noisy meetings had been present at this, we cannot but hope, that in future they would suspend their censures and ruminate in silence, and feel willing for the Lord to work in whatever manner his sovereign will sees best.

Letter from the Rev. D. Wright, to the Rev. Mr. Cushman, Editor of the Christian Secretary, Hartford, Connecticut, dated Westfield Farms, July 25, 1823.

Desirous to make known to the friends of the Redeemer, the wonders he has wrought in these parts of late, I send you a brief statement of a few things, which if you please, may be inserted in the Christian Secretary.

The first appearance of this good work, which came to my knowledge, was among that part of my congregation residing in Montgomery, on the 22d of November last, when one in tears accosted me, saying, "Pray for me." Others appeared affected at many subsequent meetings last winter, in said town. On the 26th of December, was a very solemn meeting, and numbers seemed impressed. After the sermon upon John v. 25, five or six fervent prayers succeeded. The brethren were much quickened. About this time, we began to have solemn meetings at the Farms, and a spirit of prayer was manifested, which continued through the

winter, on Saturday evenings and on Lord's-day noons, (a few weeks excepted.) On Lord's-day, February 2d, I preached in the afternoon, upon the ordinances of Christ, and administered the Supper, with evident tokens of the Divine presence in our assembly. An extraordinary spirit of prayer was displayed at the evening conference, and our faith was greatly strengthened. Also at the monthly concert, and on the Wednesday evening succeeding. Some asked an interest in our supplication for mercy, and others were constrained to acknowledge God was with us. On the last Lord's-day in March, two came forth to baptism. One of them a fruit of the work four years ago; and the other, of the present season. Meetings still continued to be interesting, tho' not conducted with so much fervour of soul as became us; and a strong persuasion, that we should "see greater things than these continued with us."

About the 17th of May, certain persons from Southampton, were excited to visit from house to house in Montgomery, whose conversation and prayers were owned of God, and a powerful shower of heavenly grace descended upon the people. Many were very deeply impressed with a view of their lost condition, and were enabled by Divine grace to lay hold of the hope set before them in Christ Jesus. Shortly after, certain of us were induced to visit from house to house, and found

our hearts encouraged to believe the Lord was near.

On Saturday, the 31st of May, I addressed the people assembled at the meeting-house, Luke xxiv. 29. "They constrained him, saying, abide with us." The fire seemed to kindle, and the solemn aspect betrayed the emotions of the heart. The text became a theme of prayer, and the evening shades were witness to the fervent intercessions of the saints. But the afternoon, and especially the evening, of the succeeding day, will never be forgotten. Multitudes flocking together at the house of worship, and the power of the Lord came down upon the people in a most marvellous manner, so that many were pricked in their hearts, and cried aloud, under the sense of their sins against the Holy God. Monday evening following, at a prayer meeting one obtained a very joyful deliverance to his soul; who could not leave the place, till, like the Samaritan leper, he had given thanks to God. From this time the work has progressed with power, and new instances of conviction or conversation have been frequently witnessed.

On Lord's day, June 22d, five of the dear converts followed their loving Saviour into the watery grave; and on Tuesday after, 4 more succeeded. Three others were added to the church on three ensuing Lord's days. The first sabbath in this month again the number of five came forth to bear the cross. This

was a day of God's power. In the evening, we had a little pentecost. About 8 o'clock a lad was overheard weeping, and confessing, and begging for mercy. Presently another, and another; and shortly the sighs and groans were heard in every part of the meeting house, intermingling with the prayers of the church. The prayer meeting on Monday evening was a similar scene. And not only was the time in the house, occupied with the uplifted cry; but also without, in almost every direction, the voice of earnest prayer was heard.

Tuesday, the 8th instant, was a day to be recorded (especially the evening) as the day of redemption to many souls.— Their sighs were turned to thanksgivings, and their woes

to rejoicings. They who assembled on the subsequent evening to seek the Lord, were in such distress, that the morning dawned before they left the place.

The two Lord's-day's past 16 lovely youth were buried in baptism with their kind Redeemer; fifteen of whom were between the ages of eighteen and eleven years.

Since the work began, thirty-nine have been added to this church by baptism, and eight by letter. Probably fifty or sixty have indulged hopes in Montgomery, and nearly forty on Westfield Farms. most of whom are youth and children, Nor is the work yet closed; for new cases still occur, and the fervent prayer continues. The glory be to God forever.

PRAYER.

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire
Utter'd or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burthen of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer, the sublimest strains that reach,
The majesty on high.

Prayer is the christian's vital breath,
The christian's native air;
His watchword at the gates of death,
He enters Heaven with prayer.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,
Returning from his ways,
While angels in their song rejoice,
And cry "behold he prays!"

MONTGOMERY